

Policy on Applications for Funded Extensions Due to Medical Leave

UCL, Bloomsbury and East London (UBEL) DTP

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the process for students funded through UBEL to apply for a funded extension to their PhD studies when medical circumstances have impacted progress. It reflects the updated UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions regarding medical leave and aims to ensure fair and consistent support for all students.

2. Scope

- Applies to all students funded by UBEL.
- Covers extensions requested due to periods of medically certified illness or disability-related absence, particularly ongoing or chronic medical conditions that cause repeated, short absences (e.g. autoimmune disorders, long-COVID, severe mental health conditions).
- Excludes extensions for reasons unrelated to health (e.g. academic delays, supervisor changes, fieldwork disruptions not linked to medical need).

3. Principles

- UBEL is committed to supporting student wellbeing and ensuring equitable access to funding.
- Funded extensions are provided in line with UKRI policy where medical evidence shows time away from study.
- Applications will be considered case-by-case, with confidentiality and sensitivity.
- Extensions are not automatic; they require appropriate evidence and formal approval.

4. Eligibility

Students may apply if they:

1. Are funded by the UBEL.
2. Have experienced repeated periods of absence due to continuing medical reasons, certified through medical documentation (e.g. fit note, letter from GP/consultant).
3. Have experienced a period of absence with a disproportional impact on the progress of their research which cannot be mitigated.
4. Have formally recorded this absence at the point of absence through UBEL absence reporting procedures.

5. Entitlement

- Under current UKRI terms, students may interrupt their studies during periods of medical leave and receive **up to 26 weeks of funded medical leave** in any given

rolling 12-month period up to a total of 52 weeks across the whole studentship period. Extensions to the funded period are automatically applied for formal interruptions of study.

- Where cumulative short-term absences due to recognised medical condition or disability but not resulting in formal medical interruptions have demonstrably delayed progress, a student may apply for a **funded extension**.
- Extensions will not normally exceed the total period of medical absence.
- Exceptional cases may be made for extensions where the impact on progress of the absence significantly exceeds the recorded length of the absence period.

6. Covered vs. Not Covered Illnesses

Covered examples (extensions may apply):

- Autoimmune disorders with recurring flare-ups (e.g. lupus, Crohn's disease, rheumatoid arthritis)
- Long-COVID or post-viral fatigue syndromes
- Severe or chronic mental health conditions, supported by medical evidence
- Neurological conditions (e.g. epilepsy) where recurring impact affects study
- Cancer
- Serious injury

Not normally covered (short-term or ordinary sickness):

- Common colds or flu (unless unusually severe or linked to an ongoing chronic condition)
- Stomach bugs or food poisoning lasting a few days
- Mild viral infections that resolve quickly
- Minor injuries (sprains, cuts, bruises) not requiring prolonged leave
- Routine medical or dental appointments
- Short periods of stress or non-medically certified absence

This policy is not intended to cover short, self-limiting episodes of ordinary sickness, but applies to ongoing or chronic medical conditions that cause repeated, medically certified absences from study. The above examples are not exhaustive. Students who are unsure whether their circumstances fall within the scope of this policy are encouraged to contact the UBEL Team to discuss their situation in confidence.

7. Application Process

1. **Initial discussion:** The student should inform their supervisor as soon as possible of any medical leave likely to result in an application for extension.
2. **Application deadlines:** Formal applications will only be considered on the following dates each year. Applications submitted outside these dates will be held until the next application deadline.
 - **1 June**
 - **1 December**
3. **Timing restrictions:** Applications cannot normally be submitted within the final **6 months of funded study**, except in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the UBEL Directorate Team.

4. **Formal request:** Submit an 'Application for Funded Extension Due to Medical Leave' form via SurveyMonkey
5. **Decision:** The UBEL Directorate Team will review the application in line with UKRI guidance.
6. **Outcome:** The student will receive a formal written decision, copied to the host institution's registry/doctoral college.

7. Responsibilities

- **Students:** Promptly report medical absences, retain evidence, and submit applications in good time.
- **Supervisors:** Support students, confirm academic impact, and ensure absences are formally recorded.
- **UBEL Directorate:** Assess applications fairly, maintain records, and ensure compliance with UKRI terms.
- **Host Institution:** Implement extensions in student records, stipend payments, and reporting to UKRI.

8. Confidentiality

- All medical information will be handled in strict confidence.
- Only staff directly involved in the decision-making process will see supporting evidence.

9. Appeals

- If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal under the UBEL complaints/appeals procedure.

10. Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually or following any UKRI updates to medical leave and extensions guidance.

UBEL DTP Medical Extensions Process

Stage 1: Reporting and Recording Absence

Student Responsibilities

Students must:

- Inform their supervisor promptly when medical circumstances affect their studies
- Follow UBEL and host institution absence reporting procedures
- Ensure absences are formally recorded at the time they occur (via Absence Reporting Form: [UBEL DTP Leave Form – Fill in form](#))
- Retain copies of medical evidence.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Supervisors should:

- Support students in reporting absence appropriately
- Ensure absence reporting procedures are followed
- Discuss potential impact on research timelines
- Encourage early engagement with support services where appropriate.

Stage 2: Initial Discussion

Where medical absence may lead to a request for a funded extension, the student should arrange an initial discussion with their supervisor.

The discussion should consider:

- The nature and duration of the impact on study
- Whether a formal interruption of studies may be appropriate
- Potential mitigations or revised research plans
- Whether an extension application is likely to be required.

Where appropriate, the UBEL Team may also be consulted informally.

Stage 3: Preparation of Evidence

Before submitting an application, students should gather:

- Medical evidence covering the relevant absence period
- Evidence of formally recorded absences
- A statement outlining the impact on research progress

- Supervisor confirmation of the academic impact.

Evidence Requirements

Medical evidence should:

- Be issued by a qualified healthcare professional
- Clearly indicate relevant dates or ongoing condition status
- Demonstrate the relationship between the medical circumstances and study disruption.

UBEL may request additional information where evidence is incomplete or unclear.

Stage 4: Submission of Formal Application

Application Form

Students must submit:

- The Application for Funded Extension Due to Medical Leave form
- All supporting documentation.

Applications should be submitted via SurveyMonkey:

https://ucl.smapply.io/prog/ubel_funded_extensions_due_to_medical_leave/

Application Deadlines

Formal applications will normally be considered twice per year.

Application Deadlines:

- 1 June
- 1 December

Applicants will normally receive a written outcome within two weeks of the relevant application deadline.

Applications submitted outside these application windows will normally be held and considered at the next scheduled review point.

Where there are exceptional or urgent circumstances that require a decision before the next scheduled review, the application may be considered by Chair's Action at the discretion of the UBEL Directorate Team. The use of Chair's Action will be reserved for cases where delaying consideration would result in significant detriment to the student or where there is another compelling reason for an expedited decision.

Timing Restrictions

Applications will not normally be accepted within the final 6 months of funded study, except in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the UBEL Directorate Team.

Stage 5: UBEL Review and Assessment

Review Body

Applications will be reviewed by the UBEL Directorate Team.

Review Process

Applications will be reviewed through the SurveyMonkey platform by the UBEL Directorate Team in accordance with UKRI guidance and the UBEL Policy on Applications for Funded Extensions Due to Medical Leave.

Assessment Considerations

Applications will be assessed against:

- UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions
- Eligibility requirements (see Policy on Applications for Funded Extensions Due to Medical Leave)
- Quality and sufficiency of evidence
- Recorded absence history
- Demonstrated impact on research progress
- Proportionality between absence duration and requested extension.

Possible Outcomes

The UBEL Directorate Team may:

- Approve the application in full
- Approve a shorter extension period
- Request further information
- Decline the application.

Where appropriate, UBEL may consult relevant institutional colleagues while maintaining confidentiality.

Stage 6: Outcome Notification

Students will receive a formal written outcome.

The outcome letter will include:

- The decision reached

- The approved extension period (where applicable)
- Any conditions attached to the approval
- Information regarding appeals procedures.

The decision will also be shared with the host institution's scholarships team or registry team where necessary to implement the outcome.

Stage 7: Implementation of Approved Extension

Where an extension is approved, the host institution will:

- Update the student record
- Amend stipend payment schedules where applicable
- Update reporting information for UKRI.

UCL, Bloomsbury and East London (UBEL) DTP – Application for Funded Extension Due to Medical Leave

Please complete this form on SurveyMonkey Apply for it to be considered

Please complete this form if you are applying for an extension to your funded period of study because of recorded medical leave, in line with the UKRI Training Grant Terms and Conditions (Medical Leave).

Section A: Student Details

- **Full Name:**
- **University of Registration:**
- **Department:**
- **Start Year:**
- **Student ID Number:**
- **Email Address:**
- **Phone Number:**

Section B: Extension Request

1. **Dates of absence taken**
2. **Total number of days/weeks of absence:**
3. **Length of funded extension requested (in weeks):**
4. **Brief explanation of how your medical absence has affected progress:**

Section C: Supporting Documentation

Please confirm the following are attached (tick as appropriate):

- ☐ Medical evidence (fit note, GP/consultant letter, or university medical certificate)
- ☐ Any other relevant supporting information (optional)

Section D: Supervisor Statement

(To be completed by supervisor)

- **Supervisor Name:**
- **Supervisor Email:**

Statement of support (please outline the impact of the student's absence on their progress and confirm absences were formally recorded with you at the point of absence):

Signature:

Date:

Section E: Student Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this application is accurate and that my medical leave was formally recorded with my host institution.

Signature:

Date:

Section F: UBEL Directorate Decision (for office use only)

- Date application received:
- Decision: Approved ☐ Not Approved ☐
- Extension length granted:
- Notes / Conditions:

Authorised by (UBELManagement):

Name:

Signature:

Date: